

Message Text

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S E C R E T GABORONS 0784

EXDIS HANDLE AS NODIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDEV RH BC
SUBJ: RHODESIA: PROPOSED TALKING POINTS TO FRONTLINE AND
NIGERIA

REF: (A) STATE 67380, (B) DAR ES SALAAM 1141, (C) GABORONE 0676

1. WE STRONGLY AGREE, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF RECENT NEWS
THAT PRESIDENT KHAMA IS SEEKING TO ARRANGE A MEETING BETWEEN
FRONTLINE PRESIDENT AND NATIONALIST LEADERS (REF C), THAT
USE OF DR. OWNE'S PROPOSED TALKING POINTS AT THIS TIME WOULD
BE NOT ONLY INOPPORTUNE BUT DOWNRIGHT COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE.
WE ALSO AGREE WITH REF B THAT THE MOST USEFUL IDEA IN THE
TALKING POINTS IS THAT OF ALLOWING THE PROPOSAL TO LIE ON
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THE TABLE WHILE PRESSURES BUILD FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATION.
THE KHAMA INITIATIVE WOULD SEEM TO BEAR OUT THE WISDOM OF
THIS COURSE (OR NON-COURSE) OF ACTION.

2. SPECIFICALLY, WE SEE A DEMARCHE EMBODYING THE PROPOSED
TALKING POINTS AS PRODUCTIVE OF THE FOLLOWING PROBLEMS:

A. THE NEGATIVE TONE OF THE TALKING POINTS APPEARS TO IMPLY THAT WE HAVE AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT CONCEDED THE INITIATIVE TO THE OTHER SIDE. THIS, FOR A COUNTRY WHICH FEELS THREATENED BY THE RHODESIAN REGIME AND YET FINDS ITSELF UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT, IS BOUND TO HEIGHTEN CONCERN OVER THE MOMENTUM IT SEES THE SALISBURY AGREEMENT AS HAVING ASSUMED AND LEAVES BATSWANA WITH EXTREMELY UNCOMFORTABLE FEELINGS OF ANOMIE OR HELPLESSNESS.

B. THE ABOVE WOULD SERVE TO HEIGHTEN GOB AWARENESS OF THEIR INADEQUACIES IN THE SECURITY FIELD, AND IN TURN WOULD FURTHER FEED THE TENDENCY TO PSYCHOLOGICAL INSECURITY. THIS ENTAILS THE RISK OF PRECIPITATE OR ILL-CONCEIVED ACTIONS AS A SUBSTITUTE FOR COHERENT POLICY. EXAMPLES OF FOUR AREAS IN WHICH SUCH OFF-THE-WALL ACTIONS MIGHT BE TAKEN ARE: (1) ACCEPTANCE OF ARMS OR OTHER MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM BLOC SOURCES; (2) ACQUISITION WITHOUT ADEQUATE PLANNING OF THE RHODESIAN RAILWAYS (WHICH GOB SEES THREATENED PARTICULARLY BY INCREASED GUERRILLA ACTIVITY); (3) REACTIONS RELATED TO WHAT COULD WELL BECOME AN INCREASED FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM RHODESIA; AND (4) A POSSIBLE SHIFT IN GOB POLICY OF HITHERTO NOT ALLOWING USE OF BOTSWANA TERRITORY BY NATIONALIST GUERRILLAS.

C. FINALLY, IF THE GOB PERCEIVES US/UK EITHER AS THROWING INCREASING SUPPORT BEHIND SALISBURY AGREEMENT OR RELINQUISHING THE INITIATIVE THERETO, IT MAY BECOME INCREASINGLY VULNERABLE
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TO PRESSURES FROM THE SMALL BUT VOCAL MARXIST OPPOSITION AND ITS SOVIET SPONSORS, WITH ATTENDANT THREATS OF DESTABILIZATION. IN ADDITION, THE GOB WILL BE PROMPTED TO FORGE CLOSER LINKS TO THE PF (TOWARDS WHICH THERE ARE AT PRESENT AMBIVALENT FEELINGS, TO SAY THE LEAST) AND TO WAGE A MORE VIGOROUS AND VOCAL OPPOSITION TO WHAT IT SEES AS A SMITH-ARRANGED SOLUTION IN SALISBURY. (IF, AS WE BELIEVE COULD WELL BE THE CASE, THESE WOULD BE THE REACTIONS OF A VERY MODERATE AND HITHERTO CIRCUMSPECT REGIME SUCH AS GOB, ONE CAN EXPECT EVEN MORE NEGATIVE RESPONSES FROM THE MORE ACTIVE AND LESS TEMPERATE FL STATES.)

3. THE ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS, INTER ALIA, SEEM TO US TO ARGUE AGAINST USING THE OWEN TALKING POINTS, AND IN FAVOR OF FOLLOWING (IMPLICITLY BUT NOT EXPLICITLY) THE COA SUGGESTED IN THE LAST SENTENCE OF REF A, I.E., DO NOTHING FOR THE MOMENT, ALLOWING THE AFRICAN STATES THEMSELVES TO PUSH FOR FURTHER NEGOTIATIONS. THIS APPEARS TO BE HAPPENING.
ALBERTI

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